A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, April 24. 1708.

MISCELLANEA.

HAving receiv'd the following Letter sometime ago, I cannot but give you the Satisfaction of seeing the Letter, whether I enter upon any Discourse of the Subject or no.

Mr. REVIEW,

YOU promised sometime ago to give the World your Opinion of the new Prophets, which has been expected impatiently, and it is suppos'd might be very useful at this Time, since you see all that has been said hitherto has no Effect, and their Number considerably spreads in several Parts of the Nation—If you therefore do not think fit to give your Opinion of their Notions and Design, will you be pleas'd to let us know a little what you think ought to be done with them, and how we ought to behave our selves towards them, either to show our just Contempt of their Impostures, or to prevent their further deluding the ignorant and abused People, your Answer to this will be of Service to the People, and particularly oblige many of your Friends.

It is true that I did promise to give my Opinion concerning the Prophets, *so call'd*, lately risen up among us; but Things of more Moment, as I thought, have hitherto diverted me, nor am I very forward to embark in that controverted Case now; yet to the Proposal in this Letter, I may say something without Offence, and I'll divide it in two Parts.

1. As

1. As to our Behaviour toward them.
2. As to their Conduct of themselves.

As to our Behaviour towards them, I cannot but think, that the Proposal of *Gamaliel* to the *Jews*, *who the Text says was a Doctor of Law*, in the Case of the Apostles was very good. *Acts.* v. 38, 39. *Refrain from these Men, and let them alone, for if this Counsel or Work be of Men, it will come to nought; but if it be of GOD, ye cannot overthrow it, lest happily ye are found even to fight against GOD.*

Now the Case of the Apostles, and the Case of these Prophets was diametrically opposite, that is confess'd; yet the Counsel being an Alternative holds good both Ways, the Case of the Apostles is set down expressly from the Mouth of their Enemies, *Acts* 4. 16. *What shall we do to these Men, for that indeed a notable Miracle hath been done by t'em, is manifest to all them that dwell in* Hierusalem, *and we cannot deny it*——The Case of our Prophets, *so far as I can see yet, for I would not wrong them*, is this; That they have pretended to cure Distempers, raise the Dead, *&c.* and made a mighty Noise of predicting what shall come to pass——*But to turn the Words hitherto, that NO notable Miracle has been done by them, is manifest to all that dwell in* London, *and* THEY CANNOT DENY IT.

Fear not then to let them alone, and *refrain from these Men*; for if this Counsel or Work be of Men, *as we have abundant Reason to think it is*, IT WILL COME TO NOUGHT, and I wish all Men would leave it there, and look on, till the Issue crowns the Expectation; if the Work be of GOD, he will certainly give some Testimony to it, by which it shall not fail to be known, that it is HIS; if it be of Man, as we say, it will have a Blast from on High, that shall signifie the Divine Displeasure to us, and openly testifie that it is an Imposture.

This I speak in general, but I must say a Word to Particulars.

(1.) They have put the whole Weight of their Cause upon their Performance of an Eminent Miracle—*A notable Miracle*, as the Text calls it in another Case, on the 29*th* I think it is of *May*, (*viz.*) the raising a dead Body from the Grave, a Body of whom it may be well said, as of *Lazarus*, that he stinketh, for both his Body underground, and his Memory above has an ill Savour; a Person that living, *deny'd the Lord that bought us*, being a known Socinian, and dead, must needs have partaken of Corruption, having lain in the Earth several Months.

I shall readily own with them, that if the GOD of Life pleases to restore the Soul to this abandon'd Carcass according to their Prediction, and in Answer to their Prayers, *GOD is among them of a Truth*, and this Thing is of him; what his inscrutable Ends are in so wonderful a Dispensation, I shall not attempt to think of, till I see the Fact demonstrated———But in granting this, I grant all they can ask, and I would caution the Readers of this Paper in this Particular, *Hold them to the Point*, it was their own Offer, that if this did not come to pass, they would own they were deluded; if it does come to pass, I must own they are not deluded, and wait the rest.

But now I cannot but observe to you, that there seems to me a manifest Token of their own Diffidence in this Operation, and that they find, as the Time approaches, more and more Reason to doubt the Effect answering their Pretensions, and foreseeing that a Disappointment will at once bring their whole Cause into Contempt, and carry off the Proselites they have made; and therefore to lay a Foundation for the keeping on Foot the Delusion, and buoying up the Credulity of their Proselites in the Reality of their Inspirations, they have by their new Champion Sir *Rich. Buckley* advanced a new Hypothesis, which if they can reconcile to the Nature of Prophetick Inspiration, I confess, will go a great Way, and is therefore most politickly advanc'd; but how to make it cohere with the Essence of Prophecy, is to me an unconceivable Mystery: His Notion is this.

That it is not Essential to constitute a true Prophet, that what he prophesies should COME TO PASS.

I confess, this is a perfect Novelty in the World; the Scripture tells us of prophesying Lies, *they prophesie Lies in my Name.* Now how a Man can prophesie Lies, otherwise

who came by Prophesying what shall not come to pass, *I know not*; it is true, that *Jonah*'s Prophecy did not come to pass upon *Nineveh*, tho' *Nineveh* was destroy'd after— I avoid the Distinction between coming to pass, and the Condition of its coming to pass, in Things conditionally express'd; but I distinguish between absolute and conditional Prediction, and thus if when our Saviour predicted the Downfall of *Jerusalem*, it had never come to pass, he had not been a true Prophet; now when Men expressly predict, that such a Man shall be rais'd from the Dead by such a Day, and in such a Manner; if this does not come to pass they must be false Prophets, and prophesie Lies in the Name of GOD; to say *he shall be rais'd from the Dead* at some other time will not answer the Design, for not to prescribe the Time, is saying nothing at all, and leaving it Indefinite, refers it to the last Day, which needs no Prophecy to declare.

Whereas then they have declared this Man shall be raised from the Dead on such a Day; nay, let us give them a Week, and this Man is not raised, it will for ever be true, that they have Prophesy'd a Lye; and I think, that will determine them False Prophets, or I know not what will.

Now my Proposal therefore is, hold them to their first Offer, that the whole Stress of the Veracity and Truth of their Inspiration depends upon the raising this Man from the Dead, which if they fail in, they must with Me pass for false Prophets.

And now I am talking of raising this Man from the Dead, I would ask a Question or two in the Case of these Prophets.

1. To what purpose is the Miracle proposed, it must be to confirm some Doctrine already taught, and which is not sufficiently believed? Or,
2. It is to enforce some new Doctrine, other than what has yet been taught?

If it be to confirm some Doctrine already taught, or fix our Faith in it, then we have the Experiment already attempted, and Heaven declaring against it in the Case of *Dives*, who desir'd something might be done that was Extraordinary, to cause his Brethren to Hear and Believe. ——— GOD Almighty refers them to the written Word, *Viz. Moses* and the Prophets; but *Dives* pressing farther, alledging, That if such a Miracle were wrought, as *one* to rise from the Dead, it must certainly open their Eyes; but the Text tells him he is mistaken, denies the Request as a thing that would signifie nothing, declaring the Word of GOD sufficiently furnish'd to instruct, and affirming on Heavenly Authority, That they that shut their Ears against the Scripture would not open them, if one rose from the Dead to instruct them——— *If they will not hear* Moses *and the Prophets, neither will they hear if One arose from the Dead:* Thus the Miracle of raising the Dead is declared from Heaven to be of no use at all that way.

Again, if it be to confirm our Faith, or fix it upon some new Doctrine, the Scripture is expressly against it there too, for the Word says positively, *If an Angel from Heaven preach any other Doctrine, than what we have receiv'd, let him be accursed*; these two Examples in Scripture, I think, barr the the Door against any Pretence to Usefulness, much less to Necessity of this Miracle.

To what purpose then will they alledge this Miracle is to be wrought? If they are content to say it is to no purpose at all, then they must be content to let me exclude the Extraordinary Hand of GOD in it from my Faith, *for He does nothing in vain*, or to no purpose.

Perhaps this Gentleman, who alledges, that it is not Essential to a True Prophet, that what he Prophesies should come to pass, may also advance, that it is not Essential to a Miracle, that it should have any Signification; but I hope they will show more Reverence, to what they acknowledge to be the Immediate Work of GOD's Extraordinary Power, than to suggest it should be exerted to no Purpose at all.

Now as to True Prophets having Prophesy'd what may not come to pass, at least literally; I need not say much, and in one Sence it may be so; but what shall we say here? It may be, some True Prophets may

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